



DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

News Release

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR

WILLIAM J. AILA JR., CHAIRPERSON
Phone: (808) 587-0320
Fax: (808) 587-0390

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DEATHS OF TWO MONK SEALS ON MOLOKA'I UNDER INVESTIGATION

Public asked to contact enforcement officials with any information

KAUNAKAKAI, MOLOKA'I – The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), in cooperation with the Department of Land and Natural Resources, is investigating the deaths of two Hawaiian monk seals on the south shore of Moloka'i.

A young female was found dead this past week. This follows the death of an adult male seal in mid-November. Necropsies indicate that both seals appear to have died under suspicious circumstances and that foul play cannot be ruled out as the cause of death in either case.

"I was saddened to hear of these two incidents, especially the loss of a young female who would have helped restore the diminished seal population," said William J. Aila, Jr., DLNR Chairperson. "Monk seals are an important part of the Hawaiian ecosystem and need to be respected as a valued part of our natural and cultural environment. The harm to one is a blow to Hawai'i," he said.

In June 2010, the Legislature passed Act 165*, specifically to increase penalties for taking (which is defined to include harassing or killing) a monk seal. It's a Class C felony (up to 5 years imprisonment). Someone convicted under this law could face a fine of up to \$50,000. It is also against federal law to kill or harm a Hawaiian monk seal.

Anyone having information related to these deaths should call the NOAA OLE hotline at 1-800-853-1964 or Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE) at (808) 873-3990 or after hours call 643-DLNR.

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Statement by Walter Ritte

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http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/Archives/measure_indiv_Archives.aspx?billtype=SB&billnumber=2441&year=2010

For more information news media may contact:

Jeff Walters

NOAA NMFS PIRO Marine Mammal Branch Chief

Mobile: (808) 282-0155

Deborah Ward

DLNR Public information specialist

Phone: (808) 587-0320

HAWAIIAN MONK SEALS
Statement by Walter Ritte

The death of these Hawaiian Monk Seals on Molokai is an indication of a dangerous trend that must be stopped.

Our elders are saying that these seals are not Hawaiian.

Our young people are calling these seals an invasive species brought in by government.

The seals are now the easy targets of blame for the many ills of our depleting fisheries.

We need to stand up for the truth: These seals are not only Hawaiian, but have been here longer than the Hawaiians.

These seals are not invasive; they are like the Hawaiian people who are struggling to survive in their own lands. Hawaiians need to see themselves when they see a Hawaiian Monk Seal.

How we treat the seals, is how we can be expected to be treated as Hawaiians in Hawaii.

December 23, 2011